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ABSTRACT

Using statewide fall enrollment reporting systems, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) generates a report each year showing fall-to-fall enrollment patterns of students among Maryland public colleges and universities, resulting in a "transfer matrix" that provides an indicator of transfer volume and destinations. At Prince George's Community College (PGCC) in Largo, Maryland, approximately half of students taking credit courses state that their primary reason for attending PGCC is to prepare for transfer to a four-year institution. Examination of the MHEC transfer matrix for enrollment from fall 1991 to fall 1992 revealed the following findings: (1) 935 students who were enrolled at PGCC in fall 1991 enrolled at a Maryland four-year public institution in fall 1992; (2) the most popular destination of former PGCC students was the University of Maryland at College Park; (3) statewide, between fall 1991 and fall 1992, 7,263 students transferred from community colleges to public senior institutions in Maryland, while 2,330 students were "reverse transfers," moving from four-year schools to community colleges; (4) for each reporting period from 1986-87 through 1991-92, "reverse transfers" at PGCC equal nearly two-fifths of the total number transferring from PGCC to senior institutions, reducing the actual net loss of PGCC students attributable to transfer; and (5) a spring 1988 survey of students who entered PGCC in fall 1984, revealed an overall transfer rate of 27%, a transfer rate of 36% for students completing at least 12 credits at PGCC, and a transfer rate of 65% for students completing at least 12 units and stating a transfer goal. Data tables are included. (PAA)

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Research Brief RB93-15
May 19 93

Craig A. Cl lagett

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

PGCC Transfers to Maryland Public Four-Year Colleges
Research Brief RB93-15
May 1993

Introduction

Approximately half of the students taking credit classes at Prince George's Community College state that their primary reason in attending is to prepare for transfer to a four-year institution. Using statewide fall enrollment reporting systems, staff at the Maryland Higher Education Commission generate a report each year showing the fall-to-fall enrollment patterns of students among Maryland public colleges and universities. The resulting "transfer matrix" provides an indicator of transfer volume and destinations, by showing where students enrolled at a particular campus one fall are enrolled the following fall. Students who transfer during a spring or summer term and do not continue in the fall are missed by this method, as are students who transfer to institutions outside of Maryland.

PGCC Transfers to Senior Institutions

The MHEC transfer matrix identified 935 students enrolled at PGCC in Fall 1991 who were enrolled in Fall 1992 at a Maryland four-year public college or university. The most popular transfer destination of former PGCC students was the University of Maryland at College Park (see Table 1). The 345 transfers to UMCP was the lowest total in a number of years. The number of transfers to University College was also down. In contrast, Bowie State and the University of Maryland Baltimore County each had record high numbers of PGCC transfers.

"Reverse Transfers"

An exclusive "one-way" look at transfer, from the community college to senior institutions, misses much student movement. While analyzing transfer success from PGCC to four-year institutions is a key component of community college assessment reporting, since preparing students for successful transfer and eventual achievement of the baccalaureate is a primary community college mission, a wider view of student attendance patterns is enlightening. An analysis of the fall-to-fall transfer matrix reveals that many students transfer from four-year institutions to community colleges. Statewide, between fall 1991-92, 7,263 students transferred from community colleges to public senior institutions. During the same period, 2,330 students transferred from four-year colleges and universities to community colleges.

PGCC Transfers to Maryland Senior Colleges and Universities

	87-88	88-89	89-90	90-91	91-92
UMCP	376	427	385	400	345
UMUC	272	267	274	235	225
Bowie State	98	110	139	129	147
UMBC	41	39	46	54	67
Towson State	70	43	71	65	50
Salisbury State	26	46	29	37	25
UMES	13	11	19	13	20
Morgan State	11	11	12	4	18
Frostburg State	15	14	23	23	12
St. Mary's	12	5	5	6	10
UMAB	8	8	9	16	9
U. of Baltimore	2	9	7	5	5
Coppin State	0	0	1	2	2
Total	**944**	**990**	**1,020**	**989**	**935**

Table 1

At Prince George's Community College, "reverse transfers" have equalled nearly two-fifths of the total transferring from PGCC to senior institutions (see Table 2). Thus the net loss of students due to transfer is less than that suggested by solely looking at those moving from the community college to senior institutions.

Fall-to-Fall Transfer Volume

	From PGCC to Four-Year	From Four-Year to PGCC	Net Transfers
1991-92	935	351	584
1990-91	989	331	658
1989-90	1,020	328	692
1988-89	990	392	598
1987-88	944	435	509
1986-87	940	382	558

Table 2

Examination of transfer patterns by senior institution indicates that the traffic flow varied notably (see Table 3). The proportion accounted for by transfers from the senior institution to the community college was relatively high for the University of Maryland College Park, Morgan State, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The extreme case was Frostburg State, where "reverse transfers" to PGCC outnumbered transfers from PGCC to Frostburg. For the 1991-92 period, Frostburg was a feeder school to PGCC!

Net Transfers, PGCC-Md. Four-Year Publics, Fall 1991 - Fall 1992

	From PGCC to Four-Year	From Four-Year to PGCC	Net Transfers
UMCP	345	159	186
UMUC	225	61	164
Bowie State	147	49	98
UMBC	67	17	50
Towson State	50	14	36
Salisbury State	25	6	19
St. Mary's	10	2	8
Morgan State	18	11	7
UMAB	9	2	7
UMES	20	15	5
U. of Baltimore	5	0	5
Coppin State	2	1	1
Frostburg State	12	14	(2)
Total	**935**	**351**	**584**

Table 3

The senior institutions providing the most "reverse transfers" to PGCC over the past three years have been the University of Maryland at College Park, University College, and Bowie State. The number of transfers from UMCP to PGCC has increased nearly 40 percent over this period. In contrast, the number transferring to PGCC from University College has declined (see Table 4).

Reverse Transfers to PGCC, Fall-to-Fall

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
UMCP	114	133	159
UMUC	92	73	61
Bowie State	35	47	49
UMBC	22	18	17
UMES	19	12	15
Frostburg State	10	15	14
Towson State	13	14	14
Morgan State	10	8	11
Salisbury State	9	5	6
St. Mary's	4	4	2
UMAB	0	2	2
Coppin State	0	0	1
Total	**328**	**331**	**351**

Table 4

Transfer Rates

Answering the question "what percentage of PGCC students transfer?" requires several definitional decisions. Do you report a rate for all students or only those with stated transfer goals? Should a minimum number of hours completed at PGCC be required? Should you only look at students in transfer programs? How long a period of time should elapse? Methodological questions also must be addressed. Longitudinal studies of entering cohorts of students followed by tracking systems designed for outcomes analysis are preferable. But these require interinstitutional and/or state agency cooperation. Reliance on state systems usually means missing students who transfer out of state. Survey approaches can capture out-of-state transfer but are typically plagued by poor response rates and the resulting bias. Individual senior institutions may agree to provide grouped data, but information at the individual student record level is needed for thorough analysis. An earlier OIRA report (Research Brief RB90-11, *Community College Transfers to Maryland Four-year Institutions*) discussed the pros and cons of these various approaches and reported overall transfer rates from 7 to 33 percent depending on method.

The state is currently implementing a new reporting requirement for senior institutions to improve information on transfers from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities in Maryland. The initial data collection for the new Transfer Student System was conducted last fall, and MHEC is expected to release the merged data files to the community colleges later this year. These unit-record files should enable community colleges to conduct the most comprehensive analyses of transfer performance to date.

Prior to receipt and analysis of these new files, what's the best estimate of the transfer rate for PGCC students? MHEC staff, using statewide fall enrollment files, have tracked entering cohorts of full-time students for four years. For the most recent cohort for which data are available, students entering PGCC in Fall 1988, the in-state transfer rate for full-time students was 28 percent.

Analysis of survey data has found that PGCC transfer rates vary substantially by student subgroups defined by goals, curriculum choice, and other variables (see OIRA report RB91-3, *Alternative Calculations of a Community College Transfer Rate*). A spring 1988 survey of students who entered PGCC in Fall 1984 revealed an overall transfer rate of 27 percent. The rate for students completing at least 12 credits at PGCC was 36 percent. Students completing at least 12 hours and who had a transfer goal achieved a rate of transfer of 65 percent. Seventy-nine percent of the students with a transfer goal who graduated from PGCC had transferred within four years of their community college entrance.

Conclusion

Like most human behavior, the transfer phenomenon is more complex than the models we typically use to describe it. The conventional assumption of a linear process starting with student enrollment at the community college and proceeding to the senior institution for completion of the bachelor's degree does not hold for many students. The large number of "reverse transfers" attending community colleges after attendance at a four-year institution is symptomatic of how students are using institutions of higher education today. Answering the simple question of "what is your transfer rate?" raises several issues of definition and method. Hopefully, the new Transfer Student System implemented by the Commission will assist in clarifying some of the confusion.

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For More Information on Student Transfer:

Clagett, C. (1993). *Transfer and Graduation Rates, Full-time Entrants After Four Years*. OIRA report RB93-16 (forthcoming).

Clagett, C. and Huntington, R. (1992). "Assessing the Transfer Function: Data Exchanges and Transfer Rates." *Community College Review*, 19(4), 21-26.

Clagett, C. and Huntington, R. (1990). *Community College Transfers to Maryland Four-year Institutions*. OIRA report RB90-11.